

# OLDER ADULTS, TRANSPORTATION AND LONGEVITY



As people live longer, the issue of mobility becomes critical. Since 1900, the percentage of Americans age 65+ has more than tripled and the number of older adults has increased eleven times. By 2030, there will be about 70 million older persons, more than twice their number in 1997.

## *Reasons to Plan for Change*

While older adults continue to rely on their automobiles for transportation, their driving skills may decline with age or deteriorating health. Some older people are aware of changing abilities and adapt their driving practices accordingly. Others need to renew their driving skills or need additional encouragement to stop driving. With longevity, people may outlive their ability to drive a car. The Administration on Aging (AoA) is committed to ensuring that older people drive as safely as possible for as long as possible.

According to a 1997 AARP study, one-fourth of the 75-plus age group does not drive, and this number is expected to increase as the population ages. These older adults will require alternative transportation services. Non-drivers may need to become familiar with the public transportation system, if it exists in their community, or they may need specialized transportation services.

## *The National Aging Network and Transportation Assistance*

States spent more than \$65 million on transportation services in 1997. That same year, the national aging network provided older people with more than 46.5 million rides to such places as the doctor, the grocery store and adult day centers. This network, lead by the AoA, and funded by the Older Americans Act, includes 57 State and Territorial Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA); 225 Tribal organizations; and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians; plus thousands of service providers, senior centers, caregivers and volunteers.

Additionally, almost 83 million people who have physical or cognitive difficulties were provided with more than 2.8 million assisted transportation trips at a cost of \$3,591,538.

Meeting the needs of older American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians is a special concern of AoA. The typical reservation is geographically remote with limited access to many services. The 1995 National Indian Tribal Transit study found that only 13 percent of the tribes reported that their transit systems meet the needs of their community.



## *Administration on Aging*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services / Administration on Aging / 200 Independence Avenue, SW / Washington, DC 20201

## ***Promoting Transportation Options***

AoA has a three-pronged approach to transportation.

First, we encourage and promote safe driving, building on the activities already occurring in the community. AAA's have linked with state and community groups to provide driver training and education to older drivers. Thus, helping older people recognize possible impairments and necessary adjustments, such as not driving at night.

Second, we encourage more community transportation options. States routinely promote transportation coordination as a part of planning and coordination efforts. AAA's provide funds directly for transportation, and also work with other community groups to coordinate transportation services. Both of these efforts leverage federal, state, and local transportation funds.

Third, we encourage federal, state and local governments to factor in the ramifications of longevity as they plan for future transportation needs. We encourage public and private responses to support safe mobility through:

- Development of new kinds of vehicles
- Designs for safer roadways
- Creation of transportation alternatives, such as walkable communities and neighborhood serving businesses;
- Use of new technology.

## ***Resources for Transportation***

To access transportation services for older adults in your community, contact the local Area Agency on Aging, listed in the government section of your telephone directory, usually under aging, elderly, or senior services. AAA's are responsible for developing service delivery systems in communities. They monitor and support special transportation services for older adults. The State Unit on Aging is the focal point for all needs of older persons within each state.

The National Transit Resource Center, operated by the Community Transportation Association of America and funded by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Health and Human Services, provides a central repository of information on planning, developing, and operating transportation services. The National Transit Resource Center can provide the names of local transit providers who receive federal money to provide transportation to older Americans and people with disabilities. You can contact them at 1-800-527-8279.

**Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA provides leadership, technical assistance, and support to the national aging network of 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 225 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:**

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**Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET**